

# The Life Challenge

*"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." John 10:10*

**Series:** Easter 2022  
**Title:** The Week  
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## WARM-UP

You are in "The Week" of Easter - the most significant week of the year for a Christ follower/worshiper. You may have made some heart preparations through Lent - so talk with your group about how your heart is doing this Easter? What are you looking forward to...and what challenges are facing you this week?

## DISCUSSION

1. Here is a brief overview of "The Week" for Jesus and the Disciples. What observations can you make that are insightful for your Easter worship?:

- Saturday: Jesus arrives in Bethany to stay at the home of his friends - Mary's Anointing of Jesus at the sundown evening meal
- Sunday: Jesus rides a donkey with a cheering, palm waving crowd into Jerusalem
- Monday: Jesus' Goes back to Jerusalem and shows his Power as King - cursing the fig tree, cleansing the Temple
- Tuesday: Jesus goes back to Jerusalem and speaks several stories with a critical application to the religious leaders, denouncing them as blind guides and hypocrites - he speaks of his death and resurrection on the third day
- Wednesday: Jesus stays in Bethany, possibly to rest
- Thursday: Jesus instructs the Disciples in the preparation for the Passover meal - they celebrate the meal as "The Last Supper" - Judas betrays Jesus and he is arrested
- Friday: Jesus is put on trial during the early hours before the High Priest and Pilate/Herod and a frenzied crowd present - he is badly beaten and crucified by Roman soldiers around noon - Jesus dies in the mid-afternoon - his body is placed in a borrowed tomb
- Saturday: the Jewish Sabbath is observed while Jesus' body is under soldier guard in a sealed tomb - the stunned disciples are grief stricken and out of sight
- Sunday: Very early several women make their way to the tomb to embalm the body of Jesus - the soldiers are gone, the stone rolled away, the tomb is empty, and angels are present to announce the resurrection of Jesus - Jesus appears alive to the women - and later to the disciples.

2. Read John 12:1-8: So at the beginning of the week (the Sabbath was completed at sundown) a meal is given in Jesus' honor. What observations do you make about this event, and what insights do they give you?

3. John 12:3: What is the significance of Mary's anointing of Jesus and why did she use her hair to wipe Jesus' feet?

4. John 12:4-6: What does Judas' response (and possibly several other disciples shared his opinion) and John's "whispered" explanation reveal about his heart?

# DISCUSSION

5. John 12:7-8 How does Jesus' response to Judas (and indirectly Mary) give new meaning and insightful application to the anointing?
6. How can this first story of "The Week" of Mary's lavish devotion toward Jesus prepare your heart for the Easter worship?

## LIFE GROUP LEADER DISCUSSION GUIDE:

This event is very important to the Holy Week of Christ's passion. Jesus is infusing the anointing with significant meaning for his death and resurrection. I am adding these points of meaning for you as a leader for your discussion:

1. What is the significance of Mary anointing of Jesus and why did she use her hair to wipe Jesus' feet?
  - The anointing of Jesus with the perfume signifies the embalming process of Jesus. John chose to include this account to remind readers that the funeral process would soon be beginning.
  - By anointing the feet of Jesus, it reflects Mary's humility and devotion to Christ. Mary takes on the position of the lowliest slave and attends to the feet of Jesus. It was common for one's feet to be full of dust and dirt from walking around, and it was usually the slave who would fetch the water and clean the master's feet.
  - It is possible that Mary poured this over Jesus and she used too much perfume as it dripped to his feet She was using her hair to wipe off the excess oil. But by doing so with her hair suggests a very personal involvement on Mary's part. A Jewish lady would usually not show her "let down" hair in public - or she could be seen as being very seductive.
  - Mary was not concerned at how others would view her as she was devoted to giving her full worship to Jesus. This is an amazing and lavish expression of love, affection and worship that those watching would hardly ignore or find ordinary.
  - It is mentioned that the fragrance of the perfume filled the house, and this is a tangible measure of Mary's affection and devotion for Christ that others became aware of. The "smell" adds another tactile dimension to the words, prayers and songs of our worship.

2. What does Judas' response and John's "whispered" explanation reveal about his heart?

- Despite being a disciple of Jesus, spending a great deal of time with Jesus and witnessing many of Jesus' miracles, Judas was not transformed in his heart. Instead, his identity was still that of a "keeper of the money bag" and he was focused primarily on satisfying his own gains.
- This verse is full of irony as the one who takes from the money bag that is meant to serve the poor and needy, objects to Mary's act stating that she should have given it to the poor. The passage presents this contrast between the extravagant service of Mary to Jesus and the selfish hoarding of Judas.
- As followers of Christ, it is possible to identify with either Mary or Judas in this story. There are times for us to be extravagant in giving and worship, and there are times for us to be extremely prudent in our stewardship. We should pay attention when our desire to save money hinders the worship and work of Jesus in the world.

# DISCUSSION

3. How does Jesus' response to Judas give new meaning and insightful application to the anointing?

- Here, Jesus emphasizes the urgency to come to him and to give our lavish devotion to him like Mary did. Jesus also suggests that he will not be with them physically forever, prophesying his impending death.
- This fragrance of the perfume strikes a contrast to the ugliness of Jesus' beating and crucifixion. Mary has given Jesus now, in this anointing, what he would deserve in death but will not be possible in his burial in a tomb. Knowing that his resurrection would happen, embalming was redundant for Jesus.
- It is also important to note that Jesus is not discouraging us from giving to the poor and needy. This statement is made at a very specific point in time - right before Jesus' death. In fact, Jesus plainly states that the poor and needy are always among us and this is a call to action to reach out to this group, just as Jesus consistently did in his earthly ministry.